

WARM BLOOD, BLUE SKY

Klu thar rgyal ལུ་ཐར་རྒྱལ།

On Nyi ma's third birthday, one of his family's goats gave birth to a lovely white kid. His father saw this as an auspicious omen, excitedly declared that the white kid'e would never be killed, and hung an amulet around its neck. Nyi ma didn't understand all this, but he knew he could play with the white kid. He shared food with the kid, so the kid often followed him.

Nyi ma's mother had died when he was only two-years-old. The white kid's nanny was milked and that was the milk Nyi ma drank. As Nyi ma had no siblings the kid became his faithful playmate and companion.

One day, Nyi ma slept while he was herding his family's sheep and goats in the mountains, and afterwards, often slept as he tended his family's goats. Considering this unusual, his father consulted a monk-diviner, who claimed that Nyi ma was in great danger. A mountain deity had taken his spirit and to save Nyi ma, the family should sacrifice the living white goat on the mountain top where Nyi ma often slept. He concluded by adding that this had to be done by the father but Nyi ma's presence was necessary.

Nyi ma was reluctant as was his father knowing how Nyi ma felt about the goat, but they had no choice. The kid was now a very old goat that followed Nyi ma, as usual, to the mountaintop. Nyi ma kept his head down as they climbed to the mountaintop. Nyi ma's father patted his shoulder, and said, "Maybe it's best now that the goat is very old and has lost its teeth. Its hooves are also worn out! It won't need to suffer from hunger before its natural death."

Nyi ma sped up, leaving his father behind. It was clear he wasn't convinced. His father tried to catch up and panting, called out, "Nyi ma! Nyi ma!"

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Nyi ma didn't reply, just kept climbing to the mountaintop. Once they reached the top, they lit an incense offering at the altar to the mountain deity. Dangling prayer flags fluttered energetically. Nyi ma turned his back to his father, who was busy slaughtering the goat and flinging its warm blood into the blue sky with his blood-covered hand while praying throughout the process.

Before long, Nyi ma's father felt something was wrong - something was missing. Nyi ma had disappeared. The father rushed to the edge of the cliff near the incense altar. "Nyi ma, Nyi ma!!" he shouted. When he saw Nyi ma's body at the foot of the cliff, his desperate screams echoing from mountain to mountain.

TIBETAN TERMS

klu thar rgyal ལུ་ཐར་རྒྱལ།
 nyi ma ཉི་མ།